

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 AID-20 AGR-20 SNM-02 DEAE-00

JUSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /186 W

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P 171904Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1246

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6304

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BL

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BANZER--EXPLANATION FOR
POSPONING TRIP TO THE U.S.

1. PRESIDENT BANZER INVITED ME TO PALACE FOR DISCUSSION WITH HIM ON OCT. 17. HE SAID HE WISHED TO EXPLAIN TO ME PERSONALLY WHY HE HAD DECIDED TO POSTPONE HIS VISIT TO THE US. HE NOTED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN BOLIVIA REQUIRED SERIOUS MEASURES TO BE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE OF HIM TO HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY AT A TIME WHEN THE IMPACT OF THESE MEASURES WOULD BE FELT. HE SAID THAT FONMIN GUTIERREZ WOULD HAVE BEEN ACTING AS PRESIDENT AND WOULD NOT HAVE HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE AUTHORITIES AND THE PEOPLE WERE STEPS REQUIRED TO CONTROL ADVERSE REACTIONS TO THE ECONOMIC MEASURES. FURTHERMORE, IF IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO USE THE MILITARY IN SOME FORM, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF, AS A GENERAL AND AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES, TO HAVE GIVEN THE ORDER. BANZER LIKENED HIS SITUATION TO THAT OF THE CAPTAIN OF A SHIP WHO KNEW THAT THERE WAS A STORM APPROACHING, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY IRRESPONSIBLE TO HAVE DEPARTED FROM THE BRIDGE AT THAT TIME. MORE ECONOMIC MEASURES WILL BE ANNOUNCED OCT. 19, HE SAID.

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2. THE PRESIDENT ADDED QUITE CASUALLY THAT THERE WAS A SECOND REASON, BUT A VERY INSIGNIFICANT ONE IN COMPARISON TO THE FORMER EXPLANATION. HE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED EVIDENCE THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING ANOTHER SPECIAL EMERGENCY LOAN FROM THE US WAS ALMOST OUT OF THE QUESTION. WHILE HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS, HE BELIEVED THAT THE PEOPLE OF BOLIVIA WERE EXPECTING HIM TO RETURN WITH SUBSTANTIAL NEW USG CREDITS. THEY WOULD HAVE BELIEVED THAT THE US WAS NOT SUPPORTING HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT WERE HE TO COME BACK ALMOST EMPTY-HANDED. PRESIDENT BANZER REITERATED THOUGH THAT THIS WAS QUITE A SECONDARY REASON FOR POSTPONING THE TRIP.

3. HE SAID HE HOPED THE USG UNDERSTOOD HIS REASONS AND INDICATED THAT HE HOPED THAT HE COULD MAKE A VISIT SOME TIME, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT CIRCUMSTANCES IN BOLIVIA AND THE HEAVY SCHEDULE OF PRESIDENT NIXON.

4. THE CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT THEN TOUCHED ON OTHER SUBJECTS, INCLUDING PL-480, SIGNATURE OF LOANS, COTTON CONTRACT PROBLEM, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE COOPERATION IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD AND FOR MILITARY INFRA-STRUCTURE. SEPARATE CABLES WILL FOLLOW ON THE COTTON CONTRACT PROBLEM AND THE SUGGESTION FOR COOPERATION IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD.
STEDMAN

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